

National Significance: Considered to contain examples of natural communities, rare plant or animal populations, or other significant ecological features that are among the highest quality or best of their kind in the nation.

State Significance: Considered to contain examples of natural communities, rare plant or animal populations, or other significant ecological features that are among the highest quality occurrences in North Carolina after nationally significant examples. There may be comparable (or more significant) sites elsewhere in the nation or within the state.

Regional Significance: These sites contain communities or species that are represented elsewhere in the state by better quality examples, but which are among the outstanding examples in their geographic region of the state. Normally, the geographic region considered includes at least the counties immediately surrounding the county in which the site is located.

County Significance: Sites that do not rank of regional significance, but which are significant biological resources at the county level. These may include sites with a good example of a fairly common community type, a species that is rare in the state but widespread in other parts of the nation or in neighboring states, or a site that has been greatly reduced from its original quality but which still has significance.